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1

IN ADDITION TO THE LECTURE ON RELIGIOUS EQUALITY,
BY EDWARD MIALL, ESQ., M.P.,

THREE

LECTURES

Will be delivered, under the auspices of the Manchester Nonconformist
Association, in the

FREE TRADE HALL,

NAMELY :—

Tuesday, January 21st.

REV. J. GUINNESS ROGERS, B.A.

SUBJECT :—"The Bennett Judgment, and recent Episcopal
Charges."

Chairman: JOSEPH THOMPSON, Esq.

Tuesday, January 28th.

NEVILLE GOODMAN, ESQ., M.A.

SUBJECT :—"The Established Church a Hindrance to
Progressive Thought."

Chairman: HUGH MASON, Esq., J.P.

Tuesday, February 4th.

HENRY RICHARD, ESQ., M.P.

SUBJECT :—"The Influence of the Established Church on
the Progress of Liberty and Liberal Legislation."

Chairman: JACOB BRIGHT, Esq., M.P.

The Lectures will be published immediately after delivery.

*Nonconformist Association, 6, Brown-street.
January 20th, 1873.*

TO THE NONCONFORMIST ASSOCIATIONS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

MANCHESTER, January 21st, 1873.

MY FRIENDS,

Barely has any movement made such decisive progress within so brief a period as that which our Nonconformist Associations specially advocate. Twelve months ago our enterprise was regarded as chimerical, or, at best, as premature, and undeserving of a statesman's serious regard. To-day the thought and conscience of the nation are enlisted on our side.

The spiritual exhaustion of the Established Church has been revealed, as perhaps never before, by the almost uncomplaining submission of the whole body of the Evangelical clergy to the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, as embodied in "The Bennett Judgment," which condemned them to permanent complicity with a doctrine they have consistently stigmatised as idolatrous.

The statistics published in the *Nonconformist* have demonstrated how much more the Free Churches have done for the religious life of the people than the Episcopal Church, enfeebled as it has been by endowments and privileges.

At the same time the ever-growing demands of Roman and Anglican priests at home, and the contemporary history of Continental States, have made men understand that in the long run and in truth there is no choice between persecution for religious belief and the principle of "a free Church in a free State."

In a word the national temper is so distinctly in our favour that we shall have our own slackness and indifference to blame if the House of Commons does not in the course of the approaching session record the decisions we desire on all the most pressing questions of the day. Mr. Osborne Morgan's Burial Bill will be sent to the Lords: the 25th clause of the Education Act, against which the Education League has so nobly struggled, will be condemned; and the treacherous design of endowing a Roman University in Ireland under the fair name of religious equality will be abandoned.



If, however, we are not simply to repel the encroachments of our opponents, but are to carry our main design into speedy execution, we must throw ourselves heart and soul into the work before us. Our fellow-countrymen are ready to receive our appeals to their justice and to their political sense; and it rests with ourselves whether or no, at the next general election, the Liberals of the country definitely adopt as a part of their general policy the disestablishment of the Episcopal Church.

The advocates of privilege and inequality may then resort to all their familiar weapons, ploys of delay, chicanery, perversion of the forms of procedure of the House of Commons, and the misuse of the veto which is conferred indeed by the Constitution upon the House of Lords, but is so often used for unconstitutional ends. But the issue will be the same as of all similar struggles; our adversaries will yield at last, but not before the Commonwealth has received some enduring mischief. Statesmen and rulers should understand that there is risk in delay. Strange and infectious thoughts are taking possession of the mind of the multitude through all Europe, and the very existence of the present social order is endangered. England will not long continue in safety if the masses of the people are to remain estranged from Christ and His Gospel. If our nation is not to be as others, it is high time that religion should be released from bondage, and suffered to put forth her full strength.

Our own duty is plain. As men we are bound to protest against the unjust disabilities under which we suffer, and to strive for full equality before the law for ourselves and our children. As disciples of Christ, we are still more strongly bound to struggle against a system which is found in this age and country a dangerous enemy of spiritual religion, which in effect denies to Christ the headship of His own Church.

These are the high motives by which we profess to be guided. Let not our actions, then, contradict our profession, but let us work as in our great Master's eye, prayerfully, patiently, earnestly, and our labour will not be in vain.

Believe me to remain,

Faithfully yours,

RICHARD JOHNSON.

President of the Manchester Nonconformist Association.







